The Women's Initiative

A Consultation With the Women of Manitoba

FINAL REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

March 1989

The Women's Initiative

The Women's Initiative

A Consultation With The Women Of Manitoba

Final Report and Recommendations

March 1989

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The Women's Initiative Consulting Committee would like to thank the hundreds of women across Manitoba for participating with us throughout the last five months. Your consistent welcoming words and encouragement were important to us as we struggled with the mammoth task that we were undertaking.

We know that we are not going to be able to incorporate all of your concerns, suggestions and ideas. Do not feel that they are lost because they do not appear on these pages. We have met with Ministers and officials, in order to ensure that your concerns are heard.

During these consultations we have been angry, amused, frustrated, impressed, overwhelmed and very often deeply moved by the issues and concerns that you brought us. It has been a memorable experience for all of us and we thank you. We hope that the recommendations that we make in this report will have a significant effect and will in some ways lead to the improvement of women's lives in Manitoba by making government programs more responsive to their needs.

We would also like to thank the various women's organizations for the work they have done throughout the years. We have used the information provided by such groups as The Women's Agenda, the Manitoba Advisory Council on the Status of Women, the Provincial Council of Women and the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women. The Charter of Rights Coalition Resolutions that have been submitted to the government have been examined and incorporated where possible.

We are pleased that in addition to holding meetings throughout the province we have been able to do some other important things within the mandate of the Initiative.

By curtailing our costs we were able -- with the agreement and support of the government -- to contribute to the funding of the increase in per diems to small, rural shelters (from $13.80 to $30.00 for women, $6.90 to $30.00 for children). We were able to hold meetings with the directors of the various shelters and together with them begin the process of establishing standards for wife abuse services throughout the province.

We were able to contribute to the costs of the publication 'Of Interest to Women' because we felt that this was the type of information for which women were asking.

Particularly satisfying to us was the very positive feedback that we got from service providers who welcomed the opportunity created by the Initiative to network with other service providers.

We were also pleased that the style we used for the consultations, small workshops that allowed for the informal exchange of ideas, was well received.

We know that with this report the work is just beginning as the policies and programs for women are formulated by government. We hope that you will continue to provide advice and direction to the Government as these initiatives are carried out.

Our thanks.

The Women's Initiative Consulting Committee

Jessie Hammond, MLA

Doris Mae Dalton

Jeanette Fontaine

Dorothy Hill

Women's Initiative Consultation Sites

INTRODUCTION

The Women's Initiative was a five month consultation process that heard from 750 women in twenty-four communities, received over seventy briefs and held sixty meetings.

The Initiative was instructed to focus its attention on two key areas:

- programs and services related to violence against women and their children, and
- programs and services that focus on economic supports and women's economic development.

However, the issues that were presented ranged from concern for ritalin addicted children to access to government buildings for community meetings.

The concerns were thoughtfully presented and the overall response from individual women, groups and organizations was very positive.

This report is a synthesis of all that we have heard and experienced. It is our final report to government.

GAPS AND OVERLAPS

The purpose of the Women's Initiative was to examine government programs and the services they provide to women.

Participants in the consultation process were asked to identify gaps and overlaps in service.

The overlaps were of three types:

a) those that have occurred because departments are unaware of the services and programs of other departments. For example, the Home Economists used outside facilitators with business knowledge to offer much needed and highly successful workshops for farm women in the area of entrepreneurial development. Within Industry, Trade and Tourism there are resource people who have the skills to provide these training workshops. (These resources are now being used).

b) those overlaps that have developed because of philosophical differences. For example, more than one organization is doing budget counselling for social allowance recipients.

c) those that were developed out of necessity - for example an organization may be funded to provide a specific service. In providing that service the organization becomes aware of related needs for which it begins to provide services. To illustrate, the Women's Post Treatment Centre is funded to provide assistance for women who have had problems with substance abuse and were victims of child sexual abuse. They have discovered that many of their clients have been victims of other types of abuse and neglect as well and must deal with many types of abuse in their lives before they can proceed to control their addictions.

Services are often funded to provide a very specific program whereas women's problems are multifaceted.

GAPS

Gaps existed in a variety of areas. Most were directly attributable to lack of co-ordination among government departments and government funded agencies. Some can be attributed to a lack of knowledge on the part of the service provider or users of the range of programs available.

a) Gaps were identified when individuals sought but could not find services they needed even when those services already existed. One participant noted that she wanted to respond to federal employment centre publicity urging women to go into a non-traditional occupation. When she pursued this with a counsellor she was told that the counsellor did not know of any such program. The provincial Departments of Labour and Education have indicated that a primary problem in increasing the number of women in non-traditional occupations has been to identify willing participants.

b) Frequently a service was identified as being in existence but a gap was caused because it was inaccessible due to language, cultural barriers, low literacy levels or because of a lack of supports.

c) Several services cause gaps when they seem to work at cross purposes. There are no provisions made for students who find it necessary to use social assistance and student aid or students who may wish to return for upgrading but live outside of the School Division and therefore must pay non-residential fees to attend upgrading centres. Social assistance, delivered by two levels of government (who seem to interpret their roles very differently) causes many problems.

d) Gaps are caused because bridging programs appear to be lacking. If one of the goals of social assistance is to help the recipient re-enter the mainstream, programs should be structured to promote this. For example, if bus and medical cards are withdrawn immediately upon employment, people are afraid to risk taking temporary or short term employment - thereby eliminating the chance of gaining experience that would be valuable in acquiring permanent employment. Single parents and women who are disabled are particularly disadvantaged.

Bridging programs in the area of education and training are also lacking. The structure of the educational system means that many people are prohibited from career choices because of entrance requirements that they are unable to meet due to the lack of educational background. Few programs exist to help individuals overcome these deficiencies. The Department of Education's Access programs are excellent models for providing this access.

e) Many gaps exist because of the inflexibility and rigid interpretation of regulations. For example, women who farm, who own land and have their own permit books must undergo an assessment before they are allowed to purchase crop insurance because of regulations that prohibit both spouses from purchasing such insurance.

f) Many programs have built in their own gaps i.e. training programs that do not provide any transportation allowance in spite of the fact that they may be providing a rural based program aimed at single parents.

g) Some gaps are created by inflexibility in the program criteria; for example, family members are not allowed to be paid to care for children while an individual receives a training allowance. This provision makes bureaucratic sense and protects the system against abuse, however, it does not make 'user' sense. In many communities the most appropriate care giver is a relative. Inflexible regulations do not recognize that there are costs to providing care, such as transportation.

h) Some gaps exist because a service is inadequately funded. For example, the wife abuse shelter system.

PRINCIPLES

These overriding principles can contribute to overcoming the gaps and overlaps identified in services to women and their families in Manitoba.

PRINCIPLE NUMBER ONE

WHEN PROGRAMS OR SERVICES ARE SET UP, IT IS OF UTMOST IMPORTANCE THAT THEY BE ADEQUATELY FUNDED.

The entire satellite system of wife abuse shelters is a good example of inadequately funded services with no supports. The level of frustration of service providers has been extremely high as they have tried to respond to increasing community needs with insufficient resources.

The most consistent concern in the women's community is a lack of adequate, stable, long term funding for services to women.

PRINCIPLE NUMBER TWO

THERE SHOULD BE CLOSER CO-OPERATION BETWEEN THE FEDERAL AND THE PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT IN THE FUNDING OF SERVICES TO WOMEN.

Demonstration projects that have been started by the federal government without the involvement of the province have had very detrimental effects - for example, the Gatekeeper outreach project in Thompson. This project and its originator, Northern Options for Women, had the potential for being both a viable Women's Resource Centre and a health outreach project. The lack of co-ordination with the province, coupled with conflict within the community, has meant the demise of a potentially beneficial project.

PRINCIPLE NUMBER THREE

THERE MUST BE ADEQUATE SUPPORTS BUILT INTO THE DESIGN OF PROGRAMS TO MAKE THEM AVAILABLE TO WOMEN.

Supports include such things as travel monies and child care. Supports can not be regarded as extras - they must be incorporated in the design and costing of programs. This is particularly true when the programs affect single parent families and women who are on social assistance.

PRINCIPLE NUMBER FOUR

PROGRAMS MUST BE FLEXIBLE.

They must be adapted to the needs of the community. The program must fit the individual, not require the individual to fit the program.

PRINCIPLE NUMBER FIVE

PROGRAMS MUST BE ACCESSIBLE.

In order to be accessible, programs must be easily understood, with information that is readily obtainable and available locally. Communication and physical adaptations must be incorporated in order to insure accessibility for the disabled.

POLICY STATEMENT

There is a wide concern among women in Manitoba that the Government develop an overall policy statement setting out its goals and responsibilities for the women of Manitoba. Such a clear statement of the government's commitment to equality and justice for Manitoba's women would provide an excellent basis for the development of programs and policies.

RECOMMENDATION 1

THAT the provincial government reinforce its commitment to women through the endorsement of a clear policy that supports equality and justice for all Manitoba women.

RECOMMENDATION 2

THAT the interdepartmental committee on women's issues continue to monitor the effectiveness of government services and programs for women and that this policy statement be the basis for all of its activities.

ECONOMIC SUPPORTS

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

A consistent concern identified throughout the consultation was the discrepancy between provincial and municipal assistance. The concerns raised centered upon the delivery mechanisms of social assistance. In some areas access to municipal social assistance is difficult to achieve. Social assistance is provided through a voucher system which is demeaning and may affect the individual's standing in the community in a way that hinders her efforts to obtain employment and become independent. It is often administered in a punitive fashion.

The vast majority of women on social assistance want to make the transition from being dependent on social assistance to leading independent lives. It is important that the manner and the mechanisms for delivering social assistance lead to this transition. To subject individuals to a demeaning system does nothing to enhance their potential.

The negotiations that are currently underway between the province and local governments to standardize social assistance across Manitoba should continue with the goal of an early resolution of these problems.

RECOMMENDATION 3

THAT the province immediately undertake to ensure that all single parent families, the majority of which are female led, have access, upon application for social assistance, to the provincial system.

Within the social allowances program there were identified a number of inequities, inflexible interpretations of regulations or unnecessary bureaucratic criteria. It was universally felt that those individuals accessing social assistance should be able to do so with dignity and with integrity. Assistance should encourage them to assume responsibility for themselves; allow them to make choices; support them to achieve self determination; and facilitate their participation as equals in community life.

The recommendations that follow are based on the belief that there are social allowances regulations that do not now allow people to do this.

RECOMMENDATION 4

THAT recent changes to the child earnings regulations be further amended to include a provision for a child to save towards an education, should that child choose to do so, through savings held in trust.

RECOMMENDATION 5

THAT social assistance recipients receive monies for school supplies in advance of the opening of school so that the children can begin school with necessary clothing and supplies.

RECOMMENDATION 6

THAT the province of Manitoba modify the caregiver qualification "provided by a non relative" to allow relatives to be paid caregivers in some situations, should that be the most appropriate arrangement.

RECOMMENDATION 7

THAT in order to assist individuals in making the transition from social assistance to paid employment recipients should be allowed to retain their medical card and bus passes for two months after becoming employed.

RECOMMENDATION 8

THAT the Province negotiate with the federal government to achieve increases in the allowable level of earned income under the Work Incentive Program.

RECOMMENDATION 9

THAT special needs allowances for social allowance recipients be adjusted to 1989 standards (special needs allowances have not been adjusted for 10 years).

FLEXIBLE WORK ENVIRONMENT

The workplace can be an unaccommodating place for women who are also responsible for the care of children or others.

The desirability of job sharing was repeatedly noted in the rural areas as a way of integrating work and family responsibilities. Women indicated that they were very interested in this alternative as it would permit them more time to be at home during their child bearing years or to care for aging parents. Many women indicated that they would like to explore this alternative but that they were unable to do so because of reluctant employers.

RECOMMENDATION 10

THAT the Department of Labour develop a program to encourage job sharing by making the option easy for the employer to administer. A promotion campaign should be undertaken to support this alternative.

RECOMMENDATION 11

THAT the Employment Standards Act and the Pension Benefits Act be modified to allow for a longer period at home after a women has a child. Protections should be implemented that would allow for the return to employment for up to a year after a women goes on maternity leave, and modifications should allow the employee to continue to make contributions to a pension plan while on leave.

VOLUNTEERISM

Women carry the main responsibility in the community for volunteer duties. While performing these duties they develop skills that could be extremely valuable to potential employers. Unfortunately, too often these skills are not valued as 'real work' and are not considered when these women are interviewed for jobs.

The role of the volunteer is becoming very arduous. For example, as the populations decrease in rural areas and a community struggles to maintain its quality of life, there are fewer volunteers who are expected to do more and more. Recognition of the contribution of the volunteer sector to the economy is needed.

RECOMMENDATION 12

THAT the Government of Manitoba urge the Government of Canada to Institute a tax credit that would allow individuals to receive tax credit for their work as a volunteer.

RECOMMENDATION 13

THAT the Department of Employment Services and Economic Security institute a campaign to promote the value of volunteer work and urge employers to credit this work during job interviews.

RECOMMENDATION 14

THAT the Department of Education develop an accreditation system that would allow academic course credits to be granted on the basis of prior experience including volunteer work.

CHILD CARE

Because of the existence of the Child Care Task Force we will not be making extensive recommendations here. However, child care was an issue that was identified frequently throughout our consultation. Women feel that it is an essential factor in any discussion of economic development or economic supports for women.

In addition, significant numbers of women stated that they would prefer to stay at home and care for their own children were that economically feasible for them.

The primary concerns identified to us included:

1. Day care needs to be more flexible - both farm women and shift workers identified the need for child care that would suit their particular needs.

2. That there was a real need for child care programs that would be accessible to women when their children were ill.

3. Child care needs to be provided in ways that are culturally sensitive; Native and immigrant women felt particularly strongly about this.

4. There are few supports available to women who choose or who would choose to stay home and care for their own children.

PENSIONS

In 1985, the average income of Canadian women was $12,378. Women are poor throughout their lives because of the low paying jobs they hold and because of their lack of access to pensions and other savings vehicles.

The province has participated with the Federal government in exploring the possibility of homemakers' pensions. This is an area of continuing controversy and a question on which women's groups remain divided. However solutions must be found and negotiations must continue.

A large number of women are employed in part time, minimum wage jobs that do not include such employer sponsored benefits as pensions. This makes it difficult for them to avoid "future poverty".

RECOMMENDATION 15

THAT the Government of Manitoba undertake a feasibility study to determine the most effective way to establish a provincial plan for part time workers to which individuals and employers can contribute. This plan must be portable, with early 'vesting' and should be 'locked in' except in cases of sickness or disability.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

ENTREPRENEURIAL WOMEN

Statistics Canada figures indicate that women are going into businesses at five times the rate of men. Various figures indicate that women are two to three times as successful as men in surviving the initial start up phase of business.

A recent study by the Women Business Owners of Manitoba indicates that for every new business that is established by a woman in Manitoba, two and one half jobs are directly created.

In spite of the obvious importance of this emergent group of entrepreneurs, existing programs and services do not provide realistic assistance to women who wish to start their own businesses. This is particularly true for the development of skills and marketing techniques for home based industries (home based industries were identified, particularly by farm women, as a viable alternative to employment off the farm or outside the home).

For women, access to start up financing and financing for growth and expansion is difficult to obtain. Banks and other commercial financial institutions have not developed products or services in this area, and existing government economic and industrial development programs do not address these opportunities.

There is a need for specific programs to support women as entrepreneurs. A co-ordinated federal-provincial approach is needed that incorporates training, business development support, financial planning and packaging assistance.

RECOMMENDATION 16

THAT the province of Manitoba begin immediate negotiation with the federal government to structure a women's economic development agreement. This development agreement should ensure the provision of capital and access to credit for women entrepreneurs.

When women establish businesses, they frequently require smaller loans.

Women have particular problems in accessing credit. Married women often do not establish an independent credit rating. Therefore upon dissolution of marriage they find that they are unable to access financing of any type.

RECOMMENDATION 17

THAT the government of Manitoba establish an entrepreneurial loan guarantee program that would be accessible to women throughout Manitoba in order to secure small loans ($3,000-5,000).

Several departments are now involved with small business development and economic development for women:

- Industry, Trade and Tourism
  - which has the overall mandate for the area
- Agriculture
  - through its Home Economist program
- Education
  - through its Community College system
- Northern/Native Affairs
  - has the overall mandate for Native issues including economic development for Native women.
- The Women's Directorate
  - through its overall mandate.

The Rural Development Corporations, funded by Industry, Trade and Tourism, have a special role in developing business opportunities and are regionally based but have not been involved in the entrepreneurial activities of the various departments. The Corporations could be a valuable resource in an overall entrepreneurial strategy for women.

RECOMMENDATION 18

THAT an economic development strategy for women be developed by the Department of Industry, Trade and Tourism in conjunction with the above departments. The development of the outreach component of such a strategy should use resource people that are available locally.

It is vitally important that role models for women exist in business development. Support to women's business organizations should continue. As well, the department of Industry, Trade and Tourism should ensure that there are female field staff available. The Entrepreneurial Women's Program needs to be more fully developed and integrated into the field operations of the department.

TRAINING AND EDUCATION

The main concern for women in this area is jobs.

Training and education is important in creating the opportunity to gain economic independence and stability. ***It is vitally important that training programs lead to jobs.***

The first step in developing an overall strategy that facilitates the integration of training, education and employment is a co-operative effort between the federal and provincial governments and those departments now involved in delivering training and education, and involving employers across Manitoba. A well articulated labour force strategy for women would contain many elements outlined in this section.

RECOMMENDATION 19

THAT a Labour Force Strategy be developed and implemented that would ensure a co-operative federal/provincial approach to training, education and employment for women.

It was emphasized that a single training program may not be sufficient to enable a women to successfully enter the job market. Except in programs like the Single Parent Job Access, there is now little opportunity to move from one training program to another to increase skill levels.

Despite a number of initiatives in this area, sex stereotyping exists in both educational and training materials. It is most clearly demonstrated in the attitude of instructors, especially in the non-traditional area.

RECOMMENDATION 20

THAT the Manitoba Department of Education develop and circulate guidelines requiring the use of unstereotyped, non-sexist material and that these guidelines be enforced.

RECOMMENDATION 21

THAT within the college and university systems audits of resource materials take place immediately to ensure the use of non-sexist language and non-sexist portrayal of both sexes.

RECOMMENDATION 22

THAT mandatory workshops be held as part of the inservice training programs for teachers that outline methods of creating a non-sexist learning environment.

Within a shrinking economic environment, few new jobs are being created within the university structure. This means that there is little opportunity for women to enter university faculities in order to correct the current imbalance in the representation of men and women on university faculties (currently, 81% of the faculty at the University of Manitoba is male).

RECOMMENDATION 23

THAT within the college and university systems, those faculties that have underrepresentation of women create advisory committees (that are predominately women) to work with the faculties to devise strategies to increase women's participation as students and as staff members.

The wide range of unco-ordinated training and education opportunities has meant much confusion among services providers and women in general. The public is unable to quickly identify suitable programs because of the diversity of eligibility criteria, wide variation in training allowances and supports and the number of institutions and organizations involved (community colleges, universities and the private sector - whose efforts have been supported through the Canadian Job Strategy) .

RECOMMENDATION 24

THAT sources of information be developed to ensure easier access to training and education information.

Training and education opportunities need to be provided more readily within communities. Training and education need to be provided on the basis of modules, or training components so women can more readily take courses on a flexible time schedule.

RECOMMENDATION 25

THAT the province adopt a training philosophy that would fit the program to the participant, not force the participant to fit the program.

Young girls and women need more information about career choices and need to be encouraged to take more courses that will help them keep their options open. They need improved career choice counselling based on the realities of employment for women, including an understanding of the opportunities that women have and ought to have in Manitoba today.

RECOMMENDATION 26

THAT an extensive public awareness campaign take place within the school system encouraging young women to keep their career options open particularly by taking courses in Math and Science.

RECOMMENDATION 27

THAT the Departments of Employment Services and Economic Security, Labour and Education develop a strategy to encourage young girls and women into the apprenticeship trades and non-traditional occupations through such measures as enhanced summer student placements and bonuses to employers for employing women in non-traditional occupations.

RECOMMENDATION 28

THAT the province of Manitoba develop a good employer award for the employer who develops the most successful program for employing women in the non-traditional trades.

RECOMMENDATION 29

THAT special bursaries and scholarships be available to encourage women to further their studies in the non-traditional area.

There needs to be increased access to student aid for all part-time students both within the the university and the college system.

This is particularly important for women who are underemployed and who may wish further training and education in order to improve their economic situation.

Farm and rural women identified this as an additional concern since many of the upgrading courses that are available are

non-credit courses and therefore do not allow students to qualify for student assistance.

Additional problems may occur when payment for courses must be provided in a lump sum.

RECOMMENDATION 30

THAT student aid be extended to part time students.

RECOMMENDATION 31

THAT colleges provide for the option of payment for courses by instalments over the period of training.

In order that the validity of women's studies be adequately recognized at the university level, it is necessary that secure and adequate funding be in place for Women's Studies programs at the University of Manitoba and the University of Winnipeg.

RECOMMENDATION 32

THAT the Manitoba government press the Universities of Winnipeg and Manitoba to earmark monies for the secure and adequate funding of the Women's Studies Program.

A range of other issues relating to women's employment, including the quesion of pay equity, have been raised by womens' groups over the years in Manitoba. There is a review of pay equity currently underway within the Department of Labour.

ABUSE AGAINST WOMEN AND THEIR CHILDREN

Assault is a crime whether it occurs on the street or in the home. The repercussions from wife and family abuse are a serious and an increasing problem. It is important that the criminal aspect of this problem is recognized, and that the community and the government make it unmistakably clear that this kind of behaviour will not be tolerated in Manitoba.

Studies estimate that one in six women are physically abused by their partners; 52% of all female homicide victims are family violence victims; domestic dispute calls are second only to motor vehicle accidents as the most common request for police services.

Abuse is a crime.

It is a crime with serious consequences and demands that the full force of the law be used to prevent wife and family abuse: there must be a long term commitment to eliminate abuse to women and their children.

Such a commitment has three essential components:

1. Protection

Women and children must be protected from family violence. In order to place this protection on a firm foundation, we must look at abuse as a serious crime with severe consequences, and agree that such behaviour will not be tolerated within our society.

2. Prevention

The incidence of wife and family abuse being committed or identified in Manitoba is increasing. It must be the goal within Manitoba to eliminate such crimes and the first point in elimination is prevention.

3. Programs for Emergency Service

An essential component of the overall development of programs dealing with abuse is the shelter system. Shelters must be well co-ordinated and offer assistance to victims on a 24 hour basis.

It is important that access to this shelter system be provided through 24 hour crisis lines.

RECOMMENDATION 33

THAT the Province of Manitoba endorse the philosophy that abuse is a crime and must be stopped. This philosophy should be reflected in all programs of enforcement, prevention and public education and information.

A media campaign is needed with the theme that abuse is a crime that will be dealt with using the full force of the law. Existing wife abuse community committees need to be supported and encouraged to develop their role as an outreach component of such a preventative program.

RECOMMENDATION 34

THAT a mass media campaign with the theme that 'abuse is a crime' be undertaken in consultation with community wife abuse committees and appropriate government departments.

It is essential that a system be in place to monitor how wife abuse cases are handled by the police. Where there is sufficient evidence, charges must be laid and such cases prosecuted. Charges should not be withdrawn unless there are exceptional circumstances.

The data from such monitoring would provide information on how cases are being managed by the police and the courts. It would provide for the ongoing identification of potential problem areas. In a broader sense, the information made available through this monitoring and tracking activity would make it possible to determine the impact of the charging policy.

RECOMMENDATION 35

THAT a domestic assault tracking project be implemented within the province of Manitoba to be jointly funded by the Attorney General's Department and the Federal Departments of Justice and the Solicitor General.

RECOMMENDATION 36

THAT the Attorney General's Department ensure that judges, RCMP, special constables, Winnipeg and Brandon Police and all Crown Attorneys undergo a training program on violence against women, children and the elderly that would enhance their awareness of sexual and child assault, domestic violence and cross cultural issues.

The purpose of the Attorney General's policy for laying charges in wife abuse cases is to ensure that the system responds to this crime in a manner that reflects the seriousness of the offence.

The Women's Advocacy Program assists with the prosecution of wife abuse cases. Victims are informed about what to expect from the legal system and are provided with personal support.

RECOMMENDATION 37

THAT the current evaluation underway of the Women's Advocacy Program include a recommendation on the expansion of the program to rural and Northern Manitoba.

Whereas the judicial processing of wife abuse cases have been accelerated in Winnipeg due to the designation of a domestic assault court, the time lag between charge and disposition in courts outside of Winnipeg continues to be a problem. Lengthy delays create high levels of anxiety and ambiguity which lead to perpetrator intimidation of the victim and victim reluctance to testify and/or further assault incidents.

RECOMMENDATION 38

THAT the province of Manitoba instruct the court system to give priority to wife abuse cases.

In some cases, restraining orders at Court of Queens Bench do not appear to be given the necessary priority. To reinforce the significance of this crime, action must be taken as quickly as possible.

RECOMMENDATION 39

THAT the Court of Queens Bench be instructed to give priority to processing of restraining orders.

There is a pervasive public perception that wife abusers are receiving light and/or inadequate sentences. This is clearly unacceptable to women and to the community at large. The directive to charge in wife abuse cases must be reinforced by the judicial processing and disposition of these cases.

RECOMMENDATION 40

THAT sentences for wife abuse be in keeping with the violent nature of this crime, and that the Province adopt a policy of appeals on sentences that fail to reflect the seriousness with which Manitobans view such crimes.

Wife and family abuse cannot be viewed as a private matter between the abuser and his victim or victims. It has serious and demoralizing effects on children and on the community at large, sowing the seeds of future violence and abuse.

The impact of family violence on children is overwhelming. Seventy five percent of men who abuse their partners observed abuse or were abused when they were children. One study estimated that sons of batterers are one thousand percent more likely to beat their partners than children who are not exposed to abuse.

The prevention of abuse must begin at an early age. It is important that the issue of abuse be addressed within the school system. It is necessary to raise the awareness of educators of the incidence and indicators of wife and family abuse, its impact on children and the role schools can play as part of a prevention program. Materials should be developed that incorporate the sensitivities of the communities using them.

RECOMMENDATION 41

THAT the issue of family violence become part of the family life education program within the Manitoba school system.

RECOMMENDATION 42

THAT all school systems should hold mandatory workshops for educators, emphasing their role in the prevention of family violence.

RECOMMENDATION 43

THAT appropriate materials on family violence be developed for use in the school system.

RECOMMENDATION 44

THAT the school system use shelters and community based wife abuse committees as resources.

SHELTER SYSTEM

The Manitoba wife abuse shelter system expanded on an ad hoc basis with a mixture of 'shelters' and 'satellites'. Satellite shelters did not require 24 hour staffing and were seriously underfunded. It is essential that women in crisis have immediate access to a facility for safety. A woman in crisis does not make the distinction between a facility being a 'shelter' or a 'satellite'. A service that is not staffed 24 hours is dangerous.

The priority must be to stabilize the existing shelter system across Manitoba. The satellite category should be eliminated and a new organizational structure introduced that would designate and provide stable support for small, medium and large size shelters.

Small Shelters - a residential service with a minimum of 9 spaces, with less than 3,000 bednights per year, offering essential programs and services designed to assist and protect abused women and their children.

These services are all rural or northern shelters with the exception of Brandon which is a rural/urban combination. These shelters service large, sparsely populated areas necessitating staff travel.

Small shelters, because of their location and the lack of additional community support services, may be the only resource available before, during and after crisis.

Many shelters also offer second stage housing, an independent living unit needing support staff and services. Although they do not have the volume of clients that the larger urban centers do they are required to offer a larger spectrum of services for a longer period of time (up to 6 months) . They provide support for a woman during a period of stabilization and also assistance to find housing and employment. It may mean help with budgeting and parenting as well as the personal growth and emotional counselling needed for the transition to independent living.

Medium Shelters - a residential service with a minimum of 9 spaces with more than 3,000 but less than 5,000 bednights, offering essential programs and services-- including the same range of supports provided by smaller shelters -- designed to assist abused women and their children.

Large Shelters - have over 5,000 bednights. A large shelter may serve five times as many women and children as the smaller shelters necessitating a much larger staffing component. Large shelters are expected to provide a wider range of services.

RECOMMENDATION 45

THAT the satellite shelter category be ended and a reorganizationed structure introduced that would designate small, medium and large size shelters adequately funded through both per diems and programming support to ensure stable consistent delivery of service.

Training both for staff and volunteers has been an ongoing problem in the field of wife abuse. Northern and rural areas often do not have access to quality training because of funding restrictions. Frequently appropriate materials do not exist.

Whereas services rely heavily on volunteers and need to provide them with the necessary training - small groups and high costs often prohibit such training.

RECOMMENDATION 46

THAT a training program be designed that would use distance education techniques (such as video and self directed learning models) to provide standard training models, criteria, and curriculum throughout the province.

It is important that by stabilizing the wife abuse delivery system the shelters will be more actively involved in prevention.

RECOMMENDATION 47

THAT shelters and community based wife abuse committees be encouraged to play an outreach role in raising public awareness on the prevention of abuse.

Statistics from shelters show that over 70% of the women using shelters come from homes where they witnessed violence or were abused as children. As stated earlier, an even larger number of their partners come from similar backgrounds.

Preventative work must begin with the children of women in shelters and continue after they leave if this cycle of abuse is to be broken.

Children in shelters are confused, frightened and usually emotionally upset. They display behavioural problems and are often aggressive and destructive. Support services that offer counselling and alternatives for children from abusive relationships are important in the prevention of future violence.

RECOMMENDATION 48

THAT a model for a children's counselling service be developed as a component of shelter service.

INFORMATION SYSTEMS

Lack of appropriate information was a key problem for both those who delivered programs and those who were trying to access programs. Several types of 'information' problems existed:

a) too little information - frequently people did not know where to find programs, how programs interconnected and what programs were of benefit to them;

b) too much information - in some cases the problem was a proliferation of material that became unusable because of its magnitude. Service providers spoke of announcements about new training or employment programs arriving on their desks daily so that they ceased to be relevant. Some service providers preferred that there be no new programs (just adequate staff to do what they were supposed to be doing) .

c) no ability to act on the information received. Frequently groups knew of programs but didn't have the resources to access them i.e. grants that have complicated application forms or requests to participate or advice but not the means to follow through.

RECOMMENDATION 49

THAT a province wide data base be put into operation that would provide information on all programs relevant to women.

This data system should include clear statements of the purpose and strategies of each program or activity; eligibility criteria; and means of access or delivery in all regions of the province. Information must be kept updated.

DECENTRALIZATION OF SERVICES

Services are generally lacking in rural and northern areas. With depopulation, the closing of rural businesses and the relocation of professionals to larger services centres, the maintenance of a network of services in these areas has become increasingly difficult.

There is a need both for additional resources, and for the development of service delivery models for a wide range of health and social services that will be appropriate to the rural and northern environments: simply transferring urban models is both excessively costly and ineffective.

Some areas of the province are notably underserviced - south east and south central for example - and the number of service providers located in geographic areas frequently does not reflect the population of that area.

RECOMMENDATION 50

THAT the province do an analysis of government services and the number of personnel located in each geographic area. The delivery of services should reflect the equitable allocation of government services, and involve the development of service delivery models that can be responsive to the realities of the rural and northern environments.

RECOMMENDATION 51

THAT the provincial government pursue a decentralization policy that would promote the relocation of government departments and/or agencies to rural and northern Manitoba.

WOMEN AND HEALTH

Women have health care needs that are different from men and often this leads to the perception that they are disproportionately heavy users of the health care system.

They often (75% of the time) have the sole responsibility for health care of all family members in the home.

The responsibility for maintaining family health through nutrition, hygiene, medical and dental check-ups, psychological support and monitoring and nursing during illness, continues throughout a women's life.

Societal shifts have lead to the phenomenon know as 'the sandwich generation' - women who are caregivers of both their children and their aging parents. There needs to be a stronger recognition of this role with more flexibility built in to the work environment and more respite care available.

RECOMMENDATION 52

The Canada Pension Plan is a federal program and as such is outside the mandate for review of this report. However, the government of Manitoba should urge the federal government to make adjustments to the C.P.P. to extend the 'drop-out' provisions to women in order to recognize the need for more flexibility during concentrated times of care giving such as care of elderly parents.

There is a desperate and growing need for the extension of respite services for women who, within their caregiver role, feel stresses that 'time off' programs would alleviate considerably.

Whereas there is a common understanding among care givers and organised women's groups that the total health care system is not adequately serving women, the health care concerns most frequently identified to the Initiative were in two areas:

- mental health
- substance abuse.

Extensive recommendations in the area of women's health are beyond the scope of this report. Some issues that were raised were midwifery, reproductive health needs for teens, increased funding for research and organizations primarily serving women's health needs, and extended prenatal care services. There was no clear direction on the abortion issue. Access to the full range of health services should exist throughout the province and such things as mobile specialist clinics were suggested as ways of ensuring this access to those in rural or northern areas.

RECOMMENDATION 53

THAT a women's health care Directorate be structured within the Department of Health and that it develop a health care strategy that would ensure equitable access to health care resources for women

RECOMMENDATION 54

That the Manitoba Health Advisory Network establish appropriate project teams to make recommendations on the broad range of women's health concerns, and specifically to examine the feasibility of providing enhanced access to a full range of health services through the development of mobile specialist clinics to serve rural and northern areas. It is important that these project teams include significant representation of women.

MENTAL HEALTH

There is a need for more accessibility to mental health workers in the rural areas.

Mental health care givers were seen as a significant link in the delivery of services in a variety of areas:

- counselling incest victims and adult survivors of incest and abuse;
- providing support to abuse victims once they had left emergency care;
- providing assistance to individuals once they had left in care situations - assisting in the reentry process.

Mental health workers were also seen as helping families remain together through stressful situations. By doing so they were preventing costly permanent government care.

They were also seen by other care givers as effectively extending the delivery of their particular service, i.e. someone working with a family who has a disabled member may be much more successful in helping both that individual and the family to cope with stress if there is involvement and support from a mental health worker.

Mental health workers, however, were seen as overworked or unavailable in the 'referral' role because of workloads. The Department of Health is currently adopting new strategies for mental health services, with greater emphasis on community based services and on the integration of services. The approach includes a number of demonstration projects to develop the capacity to respond to particular mental health needs.

RECOMMENDATION 55

THAT the mental health network within Manitoba be extended , including increases in the numbers of community based mental health workers.

RECOMMENDATION 56

THAT women's mental health concerns be specifically addressed within Manitoba Health's new mental health strategy.

SUBSTANCE ABUSE

Over prescription of medications for women, under use of prescribed medication among the elderly, and a general lack of care in insuring that the effects of a drug are understood or alternatives to that drug explored were all problems. Better coordination, cooperation and acceptance of responsibility by pharmacists, doctors and health professionals.

Where a particular problem drug is identified, self-help groups seem effective, (ie. SCREAM - for the support of parents who have ritalin addicted children) and should be supported and encouraged.

Alcohol and chemical dependency services for women do not have the resources to meet the need. The evidence suggests that there is a strong link between abuse and addictions and that treatment for addiction must include counselling for abuse.

In order to break the intergenerational cycle of abuse, chemical dependency or conflict with the law, services must be provided which address this personally and socially destructive pattern. One program specifically addressing this cycle of dependency and abuse is the Women's Post Treatment Project, a small counselling program with a very long waiting list.

RECOMMENDATION 57

THAT funding be given to the Women's Post Treatment Project to increase their counselling capacities.

There is an important need for some women to have access to their children while receiving treatment for chemical dependency and better supports need to be developed to assure this.

Women also have to be secure that they are not in danger of losing their children when their children are in custody while they are seeking treatment.

RECOMMENDATION 58

THAT a Women's Halfway House be established for the treatment of chemical dependency which could accommodate women with their children.

HOUSING

Even in areas that clearly had a declining population and where houses were for sale, affordable, adequate rental housing was identified as unavailable.

In the rural area, the Government of Manitoba is the largest landlord and because of this government has special responsibilities.

The needs and concerns in the rural area mean that many of the housing policies that are designed for the urban area do not work in the rural areas. Market demand in urban areas ensures that there is a natural flow through housing projects: when incomes reach a certain level people move out. This is not so in the rural areas where rental housing is scarce.

The shortage of rental housing in rural and northern areas presents particular problems for single women, for single parent families and for women and their children who are seeking to leave abusive situations.

RECOMMENDATION 59

THAT the Department of Housing examine the feasibility of providing additional incentives to encourage construction of rental housing in northern and rural areas, and the development of alternative models for government-supplied accomodation.

RECOMMENDATION 60

THAT women and their children who are in wife abuse shelters be given priority for access to government housing.

RECOMMENDATION 61

THAT a Housing Registry be established to provide urban residents with information on available housing; such a registry should be easily accessible, perhaps through the use of enquiry telephone lines.

RECOMMENDATION 62

That the Department of Housing promote and encourage women's Co-op Housing as a solution to housing shortages in some parts of the province.

LEGAL

CHARTER COMPLIANCE documents prepared by the Charter of Rights Coalition (Manitoba) contain proposed statutory changes to ensure Manitoba's compliance with the rights of women as ensured through the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, proclaimed April 17,1982 and are comprehensive documents.

There are acute and particular concerns about the treatment of Native women throughout the legal system. These are being considered by the Native Justice Inquiry, but they were also drawn forcefully to the attention of the Women's Initiative.

During the Women's Initiative's consultations several specific concerns were raised. One was the access of social assistance recipients to legal aid services to obtain and enforce maintenance orders.

RECOMMENDATION 63

THAT the government provide social allowance recipients with legal representation in obtaining and enforcing maintenance orders, from lawyers hired by the Department of Economic Security and Employment Services.

Another concern was the use of small claims court as a collection agency. Because there was a general lack of recognition of the 'processes' of small claims court. Individuals frequently do not understand that they have a right to appear on their own behalf. It was suggested that when a small claims writ is served there should be an information sheet attached providing individuals with clear explanations on how to proceed if they do not agree with the claim, including information on where they can obtain explanations in languages other than English.

Because of the heavy use of the small claims court by some larger corporations that may constitute an abuse of this court, it was suggested that lawyers should be banned from this court.

RECOMMENDATION 64

THAT the Attorney General's department review and improve the operations of the small claims court system.

In cases where there are no summary charges which are going to result in jail sentences, women are not eligible for legal aid. Such cases are often now referred to the University Law Centre where the waiting periods are lengthy.

There is a need for greater coordination between the Legal Aid System and the social allowance system to ensure maximum access to services.

RECOMMENDATION 65

THAT Legal Aid services be available to a wider range of income levels, perhaps on a sliding repayment basis.

RECOMMENDATION 66

THAT the Attorney General, through the provision of special supervisory grants, encourage the university law faculty to allow students to obtain credit, for participating in the university law centre's activities. This would allow service to be available on a year round basis.

People whose first language is other than English are particularly vulnerable when using the court system. The role of the court communicator is significant. This role is restricted because of regulations defining the point at which an interpreter is allowed to be involved.

There is an inequitable access to the judicial system by immigrant, Native and signing clients.

RECOMMENDATION 67

THAT the Department of Attorney General review the court interpreter system with a view to making interpreters available earlier in the intervention process.

Concerns were raised that within the judiciary, police and legal profession, services and sentence are influenced by stereotypical views of women and their traditional role. Public awareness tools such as the Legal Handbook for Abused Women are necessary public resources and should be supported.

WOMEN'S RESOURCE CENTRES

There was not a consensus in either the northern or rural consultations that women's resource centres were the most effective way to provide information.

However within the Winnipeg area the importance of the Fort Garry Women's Centre and the North End Women's Centre is well established. They require endorsement by the provincial government and the assurance that they will have long term, stable funding.

Services to francophone women are lacking. However desirable it may be to have a complete range of services developed and available in french, this is a long term goal. What is of immediate importance is the stabilization of the existing resource centre - Plurielles - with the extension of its mandate to provide a province wide service.

A means of providing information, referral and support services for Native women should also be established. With the development of Ikwe and its province wide crisis line and counselling services in Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itata, alternative models need to be explored and integration of services should be assured.

The north has identified an alternative model - a network rather than resource centre. The design of this network should ensure the active involvement of Native women.

Information, referral and support services for women may be more effectively located within existing services in rural communities.

RECOMMENDATION 68

THAT the North End Women's Centre, the Fort Garry Women's Resource Centre, OWN, Plurielles, and the Northern Women's Network receive stable funding.

PROTECTION FOR THE MOST VULNERABLE

There is a need for improved services for all women but for some groups of women access to services is further limited through age, location, language, education or culture.

The Elderly

Senior abuse is a serious problem. Elderly women are particularly vulnerable to abuse. It is a complex issue as the abusers are frequently the caregivers of the elderly and are often their children. Because of their relationship with the abuser or because they are dependent upon them, the victim may be reluctant to identify the abuser. Financial abuse which also occurs is both difficult to prove and to prevent.

It was universally agreed that the first step in prevention of elder abuse was to increase awareness and knowledge of seniors themselves through consultations with seniors' organizations and efforts to communicate with individual seniors throughout Manitoba. It was also agreed that television was a very effective tool for such an awareness campaign.

An important element in legislation for the prevention of elder abuse is the establishment of a registry which should be of the abused - not of the abuser. This would increase the likelihood of abuse being identified.

RECOMMENDATION 69

THAT the Minister Responsible For Seniors undertake a series of consultations on the problem and remedies for elder abuse.

RECOMMENDATION 70

THAT legislation be introduced that would protect the elderly from abuse and protect those who report this abuse.

RECOMMENDATION 71

THAT legislation on elder abuse include the establishment of a registry of the abused.

RECOMMENDATION 72

THAT the Departments of Housing, Community Services and the Seniors Directorate develop a strategy whereby empty bachelor apartments in senior housing facilities could be used for elder abuse victims, providing there were appropriate supports.

Concerns were raised that elderly people seeking redress through the courts were further victimized by the judicial system with countless delays, changes in crown representatives, inadequate systems - such as interpreters - and a refusal to take the elderly persons needs into account when testimony is required.

RECOMMENDATION 73

THAT the Attorney General explore establishing a system of 'out - of - court' hearings so that victims who are in frail health are not subjected to hours of waiting in court rooms.

House renovation and repair fraud is a serious problem for seniors who may be vulnerable because of isolation, loneliness or language barriers. More public awareness is needed in this area and resources need to be available so that seniors are less vulnerable.

RECOMMENDATION 74

THAT the Seniors Directorate work with the appropriate seniors organizations to establish a network of retired contractors etc. who would be available to seniors for consultation in this area.

There was a great sensitivity to the role of the caregiver for the elderly. There are unrelenting demands and few resources or support groups for the caregivers and few places for them to air their concerns.

RECOMMENDATION 75

THAT resources for caregivers of the elderly be established such as respite care, extended adult day groups, short term placement services and peer groups for mutual aid and support.

The societal view of the elderly as a burden must change. Services must be provided that reflect the will to enhance their quality of life. Essential in this provision of service are initiatives that will ensure their safety and alleviate loneliness, support their independence, and involve seniors themselves in the provision of services.

RECOMMENDATION 76

THAT the Seniors Directorate work with appropriate seniors organizations to set up a buddy system offering support and contact.

Information and its accessibility is of utmost importance to seniors. Information services need a 'one-stop-shopping' approach where one inquiry results in the research required being done and an answer being provided.

RECOMMENDATION 77

THAT the Seniors Directorate incorporate the provision of an information service as part of their mandate.

NATIVE WOMEN

In this, and other consultations, Native women have identified economic development and supports for economic development as a priority. There was a concern expressed that training and education programs should be available within communities. Training programs must lead to jobs.

It was recognized that skills need to be developed in Native communities in the province. To this end training programs need to be sensitive to the needs of Native women.

RECOMMENDATION 78

THAT advisory councils of Native women be developed at both Red River and Keewatin Community Colleges to advise on ways of making training programs accessible to Native women.

There are extremely limited resources for economic development for Native women. Supports that are available within the community at large are often not available to them. Child care is not readily available in isolated and northern communities. An economic development strategy that is responsive to the particular needs of Native women is essential.

RECOMMENDATION 79

THAT the province develop an economic development strategy for Native women.

Native women are high users of social service agencies. It is frequently the case that service agencies which actually serve predominantly Native clients, have few Native staff and have even fewer Native women in decision making roles. It is particularly important that these service providers for Native women employ several Native staff. Frequently Native staff are now being hired in isolated positions and the expectation of delivery of services to most Native clientele by that Native staff is onerous. It also prohibits Native staff from equitable participation within an organization.

RECOMMENDATION 80

THAT government funding to service agencies whose primary clientele is Native women be dependent upon those agencies hiring Native women staff in equal proportion to their representation within the clientele.

RECOMMENDATION 81

THAT consideration of funding proposals for service organizations whose primary clientele is Native be based on proportional representation of Native women on their decision making boards.

Policy direction for departments serving Native women seems to be lacking. Funding applications from Native women's organizations are 'bounced' from one department to another and are frequently required to be rewritten. This has led to a high level of frustration and anger among Native women's organizations. Although asked to participate in the structuring of policy and/or direction for government, Native women do not receive the funding that would enable them to participate in such discussions.

RECOMMENDATION 82

THAT the Native Secretariat, in conjunction with Native women, develop a strategy for Native women for the province of Manitoba that would include a funding approval process.

RECOMMENDATION 83

THAT the umbrella Native women's organization in the province, the Indigenous Women's Collective, receive immediate funding in order that they be able to carry out organizational development.

IMMIGRANT WOMEN

The most important issue to the immigrant women during this consultation was language training. This issue is felt to be paramount because language is so fundamental to the ability to participate equitably in society. Concerns were raised that the province does not appear to have a co-ordinated 'language acquisition' policy. The Literacy Task Force will be making recommendations in this area which we hope can contribute to better and more responsive language training services for immigrant women. Current programs are federally funded but monitored and co-ordinated by the province and some problems in program design and delivery result from this shared jurisdiction.

Often the acquisition of language comes in phases from basic to more specialized. A program sensitive to the needs of immigrant women should be

- ongoing
- readily available
- designed to add on 'components' (basic English, various levels of literacy, academic and professional levels).

Essential to the access of such language training is the provision of training allowances and child care facilities so that family sponsored immigrant women are able to take training programs.

In order that quality is assured there needs to be standards and regulations both developed and recognized. It is important for community recognition that language courses be accredited.

RECOMMENDATION 84

THAT, in conjunction with immigrant women, the province develop a language training strategy that consists of 'components' that allow language to be learned to the level required.

To facilitate cultural adaptation as well as language learning, groups of 'women only' are often most effective. Some immigrant women more comfortably share their concerns and problems within this type of group and build supportive networks that help them adapt to their new culture.

RECOMMENDATION 85

THAT language training groups be structured so that, should women choose, 'women only' groups are available.

The accreditation of foreign credentials remains a problem. A system for recognition for foreign credits and/or retraining to Canadian standards is extremely important. The Refugee Medical Doctors Program was seen as a particularly useful model and one that should be applied in other areas. Universities have a responsibility to update their equivalency ratings so that degrees from international universities can be recognized .

RECOMMENDATION 86

THAT the province develop a system whereby the accreditation of foreign degrees can be established.

Effective affirmative action programs are needed to ensure the employment of immigrant women.

Service agencies must be sensitive to the cultural and language needs of their clients through hiring liaison workers and providing cross cultural training for staff. Cross cultural training is also required for the judiciary, the legal profession, and police officers.

RECOMMENDATION 87

THAT, in conjunction with the Immigrant Women's Association, the Departments of Attorney General and Community Services develop an intensive cross cultural training program for use within service agencies, the judiciary, the legal profession and police officers.

Interpreters must understand the terminology specific to the area in which they are interpreting i.e. law, medicine, health and abuse. It is important that the International Centre be supported in the work they do and that the range of specialized interpreters courses be extended.

PROSTITUTION

Prostitution is undoubtedly a poverty related issue. The majority of prostitutes are young women with few options.

In order for them to begin the process of exploring alternatives for themselves there is the need to be able to respond immediately to their needs.

One of the few organizations that has been successful in providing supports to this group of women is Prostitutes and Other Women for Equal Rights -- POWER. It is of utmost importance that POWER be given the flexibility to respond to the wide range of needs for their clients.

RECOMMENDATION 88

THAT POWER be supported by stable funding.

FARM WOMEN

The crisis facing the family farm has placed pressures on farm women. In addition to their traditional roles of wife, mother, farm hand and farm manager, they are now increasingly required to provide off farm income as well. Farm women spoke with passion of their desire to remain on the family farms and preserve a way of life.

The home economists have been an important resource to farm women. Their services, however, have been poorly integrated into governme.ıt services outside the Department of Agriculture. There needs to be recognition of the skills and services that they can provide, more knowledge of the resource materials and the availability of their services within government generally.

Their recent support of economic development, small business opportunities, and the promotion of home based ir.dustries is an excellent example of their ability to respond to changing demands.

RECOMMENDATION 89

THAT the home economists be integrated into the provision of a wider range of government services.

Some types of support for farm women are lacking, child care being a notable example. The child care needs of farm women are unique - heavy concentration of need during seasonal work, extended hours, scarce population. New and innovative models of child care must be structured.

The isolation of the family farm and the relative lack of ability to "network" makes the ongoing support of such events as the Farm Women's Conference important. This event, which has occurred for the last three years was identified throughout the province as a significant support for farm women. The response to this conference is overwhelming, with long waiting lists and active participation. Many regions have now established local conferences. In addition to the networking opportunities for farm women, this conference provides an excellent education opportunity for service providers and should be regarded as an educational tool by the provincial government.

Because of a traditional view of the farm family, some inequities exist in the ability for women to acquire crop insurance.

RECOMMENDATION 90

THAT the Manitoba Crop Insurance Corporation amend their regulations so that all farm women who independently own property, and hold permit books, can independently purchase farm crop insurance.

ADOLESCENT MOMS

A growing number of adolescent women are having and keeping their babies. They are returning to high school with children to support. They need parenting skills, life skills, education and training for future employment. They and their children are highly vulnerable for an extended period of time and they need the compassion and the support of the community.

RECOMMENDATION 91

THAT there be a study of the long term supports needed by adolescent mothers and their children as part of a government commitment to provide such supports.

This is seen as a long term cost effective measure because it can contribute to the chances these young women and their families have to become independent.

DISABLED WOMEN

Disabled women stated clearly that they were women first and disabled second. Their needs were the same as any other women's. Services and programs should be made accessible.

Respite and home care are necessary and their provision means the improved ability to keep the disabled individual within the community. This avoids costly and dehumanizing institutional care.

A range of communication tools are required in order to make programs accessible. Physical accessibility, in a dignified manner, needs to be assured. When programs and services are accessible to the disabled it is important that they are routinely advertised as such.

RECOMMENDATION 92

THAT designated funds be allocated for the purpose of ensuring accessibility and that these funds be used only for this purpose.

RECOMMENDATION 93

THAT the Department of Culture, Heritage and Recreation make it a requirement that all government documents for public release include symbols indicating physical and communication accessibility.

FRANCOPHONE WOMEN

There is a need for increased services that are available in french. Careful exploration needs to be given on the best ways to provide a range of services that are linguistically and culturally appropriate. Negotiations have and continue to take place between the Francophone community and government.

French language counselling services are available in the private sector. However, access to these services is determined by the ability of the client to pay.

RECOMMENDATION 94

THAT fee for service provisions are made to enable francophone women to access private sector counselling services. Economic supports should be available on a geared to income basis. The francophone Women's Resource Centre, Plurielles, can assist in disseminating information about these services throughout Manitoba's francophone community.

CONCLUSIONS

Women across Manitoba and successive governments of this province have made significant progress in redressing historic patterns of discrimination and injustice towards women.

In that process, women have become more confident and critical of areas in which government policies or programs fail to respond to their needs and legitimate expectations.

The areas of concern that the women of Manitoba voiced to the Women's Initiative -- economic security, wife and family abuse, adequacy of services in rural and northern areas, the need for greater responsiveness in health services and greater equality in legal matters, and the need for action to protect and promote the interests of those who are most vulnerable in the community -- are all areas that governments are currently moving to address.

The message to government from the women of Manitoba is unmistakable:

> ***there is a need for prompt and continuing action to reform and improve government policies and services to achieve greater equality and justice for women in all parts of Manitoba.***

March 1989.